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ABSTRACT

Using data from a 1980 study of Iowa caucus and state nominating convention attendees a study investigated the newspaper and television use of political activists and opinion leaders or elites. Demographic and psychological variables were used to explain differences in media use behavior between the two groups, as well as to determine how the media use of the elites and the activists differed from that of the general public. A questionnaire on demographic variables as well as organizational activity and political partisanship was mailed to just under 4,000 people from both the Democratic and Republican parties and 1,980 completed surveys were returned. Two different measures were used to gauge communication behavior--one measuring frequency of newspaper and television use and the other gauging media preference. Results indicated that elites were older, highly educated, highly partisan, more likely to be males and members of organizations than were activists, while activists were young or middle aged, highly educated, and highly partisan. More women than men were activists, and subjects indicated they became activists at an early age--the 26-35 age group had the greatest number of activists. Elites read newspapers more frequently, but there was little difference in television use, and both groups were heavy consumers of media news. In fact, 70% or more of both activist and elite groups were bunched up in the two highest frequency of newspaper and television use categories. Findings suggest that media use behavior of activists and elites did not necessarily match those of the general public. (Eight tables of data and 78 footnotes are appended.) (NKA)

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Media Use Behavior of Political Activists and Political Elites

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Paper presented to the Student Theory and Methodology Division of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication convention, Aug. 1-4, 1987.

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Activists and elites are the heart and mind of the body politic. But these important groups have managed only a brief mention in the appendix of communication research annals.

Political scientists have long been fascinated by political elites because, as C. Wright Mills put it, their "positions enable them to transcend the ordinary environments of ordinary men and women; they are in positions to make decisions having major consequences."[1]

Political activists have been the focus of renewed research interests because they link the electorate and political officials.[2] They are the individuals who lick envelopes and canvass neighborhoods to help bring the candidate's message to the voters. At the same time, they help articulate the public's views to elected officials by writing Congressional representatives, attending town meetings and by sundry other political activities.

Yet the media use behavior of political elites and activists has received little attention.

Researchers have known since Paul Lazarsfeld and associates first studied the political behavior of the citizens of Erie, Ohio that opinion leaders read and listen to campaign materials more often than nonopinion leaders,[3] but in the intervening years only a handful of studies have investigated elite media behavior. Many of these studies simply confirmed what Lazarsfeld had already proven: elites are heavy media users.[4]

Only a few studies have gone beyond the claim that elites

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are heavy media users. One such study, conducted by Delmar Dunn, discovered that 26 high officials in the Wisconsin government were avid newspaper readers. Thirty-six percent read five or more newspapers daily.[5] Marvin Olsen, on the other hand, found that both political leaders and activists reported a moderate diet of television news viewing.[6] More recently, newspapers (followed by radio and television) were discovered to be the main media source of Indiana State legislators for general surveillance, constituent decisions and local government decisions.[7] However, an earlier study showed television and newspapers were both moderately correlated with self-reported opinion leadership, although newspapers were more strongly related to knowledge about two Florida Senate candidates running that year.[8]

Other studies have looked at what newspapers and magazines American leaders read,[9] and the media behavior of both Latin American[10] and Egyptian[11] elites.

Political activists have received even less attention than elites. Aside from Marvin Olsen's previously mentioned study of political activists and elites, the only other work that has directly investigated political activist media behavior is one by G.R. Boynton and associates who discovered that while 83 percent of the "attentive constituents" read magazines about public affairs on a weekly basis, only 28 percent of the general public did likewise.[12]

The media use of political activists can only be inferred through studies of political activity and political participation. Political activity has been touted as the best

predictors of newspaper[13] and multiple media use.[14] Numerous studies have linked media use to political behavior and atttiudes such as voting, interest in election outcome, political knowledge and attempts to persuade others to adopt one's political views. But these are studies of the general population, not of activists.

More attention needs to be focused on the media use of political activists and elites for at least two reasons. First, public officials and activists don't make decisions in a vacuum. The decisions they make are based on information, much of it culled from the media. The quality of decisions political actors make will depend, in part, on the quality of information they receive from the media. Second, studies show that people receive information through a multi-step flow of communication. Information spreads gradually from the media through several relays of opinion leaders who communicate with one another and with followers.[15] Therefore, a citizen's ability to make intelligent voting decisions depends on the quality of information he or she receives from the opinion leaders. This, in turn, depends on the activists' ability to pick fruitful information from the media.

This study will use a 1980 study of Iowa caucus and state nominating convention attenders to investigate the newspaper and television use of political activists and elites. Demographic and psychological variables will be used to help explain differences in media use behavior between activists and elites. The media use variables will also be run against background characteristics to

determine how the elites and activists differ from what researchers have found about media use behavior in the general public.

Activists and elites serve different functions in the political system. Studies show the two groups also differ from each other and from the general public on some important background characteristics.

Researchers agree that political activists tend to be highly educated.[16] For instance, Abramowitz and associates, in a study of delegates to the 1980 state conventions of 11 caucus states (including Iowa), found that 56.6 percent of the Republicans and 46 percent of the Democrats were college graduates while 80 percent had attended some college.[17] The 1980 census shows only 28.6 percent of Iowans attended college and 13.9 percent graduated.[18]

Political activists tend to be middle aged, although researchers disagree over which age group is the most politically active. One study pegged the average age of activists at 42,[19] but most researchers claim activists fit somewhere in the 35 to 54 range.[20] One study showed that the 50-59 age group was the most politically active, but the 40-49 age group was the most politically knowledgeable and the 30-39 group was the most opinionated.[21]

Political activism increases greatly after a person reaches 30 and peaks in the 40s because individuals have settled into their community and can direct their energies to outside activities. Before age 30, energies are largely focused on going to school, starting a career and finding a mate.[22]

Women have reduced the political participation gap between themselves and men during the last 30 years,[23] but differences haven't been eliminated. One study showed that while differences between men and women in political and campaign activity have dropped dramatically, gaps still persist in following the campaign via newspaper and television, levels of campaign interest and concern, as well as perceived efficacy.[24] Most researchers agree that gender differences in level of political participation reflect educational and occupational disparities and that the political participation gap should continue to narrow as more women pursue higher education and enter the workforce.[25]

Researcher Marvin Olsen contends that membership in voluntary associations is the strongest predictor of political activity.[26] Others don't attraibute quite as much power to the role of organizational activity, but the relationship between organizational membership and political activism has been well-established.[27] Although some argue that organizational activity is simply an artifact of high socioeconomic status, there is also evidence that belonging to organizations mobilizes citizens to participate in politics irrespective of social status.[28]

Political partisanship was once the most potent psychological predictor of political participation among the general population, but clearly the importance of partisanship is declining. For instance, the number of crossover voters in local elections increased from 26 percent in 1958 to 56 percent in 1974.[29] But partisanship, not surprisingly, remains high among political activists. Seventy-eight percent of the respondents to

the 11-state caucus study of 1980 convention delegates were strong national party partisans and similar results were found for levels of state partisanship.[30]

Political elites, like activists, are well-educated and, as a whole, are better educated than activists.[31] Olsen found that 33 percent of his elites had attended 16 or more years of school compared to 22 percent of the activists.[32] Not only are activists better educated, but they are often recruited from the most prestigious colleges. Fifty-one out of the 100 senators in 1960 attended an Ivy League or other private college[33] while 52 percent of Nixon administration officials attended an Ivy League or other quality institution.[34]

It takes time to climb to a position of power. Not surprisingly, then, elites are generally older than political activists.[35] Olsen found 41 percent of his leader sample was 60 years or older and another 22 percent were between the ages of 50 and 59.[36]

Women have made great strides in narrowing the gap in many political circles, but the elite remains largely a "men's only" club.[37] For instance, in 1977 women held only eight seats in the U.S. House of Representatives, 68 in state senates, 281 in state assemblies, 281 in county commissions and 290 mayorships.[38] The 1986 election was termed a watershed for women politicians. Democract Barbara Mikulski defeated another woman contender for a Maryland senate seat and Republican Kay Orr won a battle of women for the Nebraska governorship. Women picked up four more seats in the House of Representatives and 15 in lieutenant governor and

secretary of state posts.[39] But while the clubhouse doors have cracked open a bit wider, women are still far from parity.

As mentioned earlier, Marvin Olsen considered organizational activity to be the best predictor of activism. Elites also tend to be joiners.[40] Olsen found political leaders were slightly more likely than activists to attend three or more voluntary associations (44 to 41 percent) and attend these groups regularly (38 to 32 percent). This compares to 17 and 16 percent respectively for the entire population.[41]

Most elites must fly under the banner of one of the two political parties to get elected, so, not surprisingly, they tend to be more intensely partisan than the electorate.[42] No studies could be found to compare the partisanship levels of activists and elites, but there is no reason to believe the "true believers" would be less committed to the party than the leaders.

The picture that emerges of the political activist is a well-educated, middle-aged man, actively involved in organizations and highly partisan. Political elites deviate even more from the norm than activists. They are older, more highly educated, more likely to be male and more active in organizations than political activists. Elites are probably similar in level of partisanship.

While the scant evidence indicates political activists and elites are heavy media users, it would be a mistake to assume that background characteristics of heavy media consumers in the general public mirror those of activists and elites.

Most studies do find that newspaper reading is significantly associated with high levels of education[43] and organizational

activity.[44] On the other hand, educational level appears inversely related to television use,[45] although one study found a curvilinear relationship with TV consumption peaking at 11th and 12 grade then dropping off after that.[46] People who belong to several organizations tend not to watch television news.[47]

While a few studies indicate that newspaper use increases with age,[48] many also show a curvilinear relationship. Readership is low for the young, peaks at about age 40, then declines rapidly after that.[49] Age may be the best predictor of television news viewing.[50] Some studies claim television news viewing increases with age[51] while others see a curvilinear relationship with both young and old being frequent viewers.[52]

Researchers are split on the relationship between gender and newspaper reading. Several studies claim men are more likely to read a daily newspaper than women[53] or to read more than one paper.[54] However, several studies have failed to find a significant relationship between gender and newspaper use[55]. The relationship between gender and television use is even more muddled. Greenberg and Kumata found that gender was the best predictor of media use, with women spending much more time in front of the television than men.[56] Others have found similar results.[57] But some researchers claim men are more frequent television news viewers[58] while others have found no relationship.[59]

Two schools of thought collide on the question of levels of partisanship and media use. Some have argued that partisanship may create a motive for avoiding political content. Those who

base their decisions on party identification have little incentive to read political news because they don't seek voter guidance.[60] Others argue that party attachment is linked to increased political interest[61] and the politically interested are high media users.[62] Partisans also turn to the media to reinforce political decisions.[63] Studies have reflected this philosophical split.[64] Some have found partisanship linked to heavy media use, but others have found that independents are more likely to be heavy media users than partisans[65] and that those who pay attention to candidates in the media are more likely to split their ticket in voting.[66] Heavy news viewers are also more likely to call themselves politically moderate than those who pay little attention to the media.[67] The politically interested tend to prefer newspapers over television.[68]

Despite (or perhaps because of) the multitude of media use studies--some 574 as of 1979[69] --no clear picture of media use behavior in the general public emerges. However some of the findings among average citizens, such as the inverse relationship between education and organizational activity with television use, appear to run counter to what little is known about activist and elite media behavior. It is hoped that this study will provide a clear picture of the media use of at least two groups, the political activists and elites.

Hypotheses

Based on a review of the literature, the following predictions can be made about the differences between activists and elites in media use and selected background variables.

1. Frequency of newspaper use will be significantly and positively related to both activism and elitism.

2. Elites will report higher frequency of newspaper use than activists.

3. Frequency of television news use will be moderately and positively related to both activism and elitism.

4. Elites will report higher frequency of television news use than activists.

5. Level of education will be significantly and positively related to both activism and elitism.

6. Elites will be more highly educated than activists.

7. Age will be significantly and positively related to elitism.

8. There will be a curvilinear relationship between age and activism with level of activism peaking at ages 46-55 and declining after that.

9. Elites will be older than activists.

10. There will be significantly more male than female elites.

11. Men will be more likely than women to be activists, but the difference won't be as large as with elitism.

12. Organizational activity will be significantly and positively related to both activism and elitism.

13. Elites will be more active in organizations than activists.

14. Partisanship will be significantly and positively related to elitism and activism.

15. There will be no significant differences in the level of partisanship between activists and elites.

From what researchers have discovered about characteristics of activists and elites and about media use patterns among the

general public, the following predictions can be made about the relationship of frequency of newspaper and television use as well as media preference to background characteristics among activists and elites.

1. Frequency of newspaper use will be significantly and positively related to level of education among the activist/elite sample.

2. Frequency of television news use will be moderately and positively related to level of education.

3. The well-educated will prefer newspapers over television.

4. Frequency of newspaper use will be significantly and positively related to age.

5. Frequency of television news use will be significantly and positively related to age.

6. There will be no significant relationship between media preference and age.

7. Men will be slightly more likely than women to report frequent newspaper use.

8. Men will be slightly more likely than women to report frequent television news use.

9. Men will prefer newspapers and women will prefer television news, but the relationship won't be strong.

10. Frequency of newspaper use will be significantly and positively related to organizational activity.

11. Frequency of television news use will be moderately and positively related to organizational activity.

12. Those who belong to three or more organizations will prefer newspapers over television news.

13. Frequency of newspaper use will be significantly and positively related to partisanship.

14. Frequency of television news use will be moderately and positively related to partisanship.

15. Strong partisans will prefer newspapers over television news.

Methodology

Data set--The data analyzed in this study were generated by political science professors James L. Hutter of Iowa State University and Steven E. Schier of Carlton College during the latter half of 1980. Questionnaires were mailed to just under 4,000 people, 1,000 each to those who attended the Republican and Democratic presidential caucuses in January 1980 and 1,000 each to people elected to the parties' summer presidential nominating state conventions.

In all, 1980 surveys were completed, a 49.5 percent return rate. Four hundred twenty-eight were returned from the Democratic caucus sample, 441 from the Republican caucus attenders, 353 from the Democratic state convention delegates and 358 from the Republican state convention delegates.

Answers for the full sample of 1980 respondents had a sampling error or +/- 2 percent using a 95 percent confidence level.

Variables--The variables used for this study were taken directly or adapted from the 1980 Iowa political party survey.

Three demographic variables--age, education and gender--were chosen for analysis along with organizational activity and political partisanship. Age, education, gender and organizational activity were chosen because past research indicates they are significantly related to activism and elitism. Partisanship was selected because the variable is not often studied by elite and activist researchers.

Measures of level of education, gender and sex were

straightforward.70 Organizational activity was measured through an index, created by the original authors, which asked respondents how many of 12 possible types of organizations they had been politically active in.71 Six questions were used to create an index to measure political partisanship.72 The index consisted of summed unweighted responses for each of the items.

A reliability test was run to determine the scalability of the partisanship index. The scale registered a chronbach's alpha (which measures the internal consistency of a set of items) of .73, which is just above the figure which is considered statistically reliable.73

Two different measures were used to gauge communication behavior, one that measured frequency of newspaper and television use and the other to gauge media preference.

Frequency of media use was measured by responses to two questions: "How often do you read newspaper articles about the election?"74 and "How often do you watch national television of news broadcasts during the early evening?"75

The media preference question was: "Upon which of the following do you rely most frequently for accurate political news and information?" The Des Moines Register and other hometown newspaper categories were combined into one newspaper readership variable and run against television news use. There were too few responses in most of the other possible answer categories (radio, newsmagazines, and friends and acquaintances) to include them in this analysis.

Political activists were differentiated from elites through the question: "Have you ever held any elected public office?"

Those who answered yes were labeled "elites" and those who had never held office were deemed "activists"-- 257 respondents qualifying as elites and 1,666 as activists. The strategy of automatically labeling caucus attenders as activists has been adopted by other researchers[76] because caucus attendance requires more dedication than voting in primaries. Caucus attenders cannot choose the time to vote; they must assemble at the designated place at the designated time to debate party platforms as well as indicate candidate preferences. Therefore, caucus attendance is much lower than primary voting and attracts mainly the politically interested.

Data analysis--The data were analyzed in two stages. In the first stage, the elite/activist variable was compared with the two media frequency variables to distinguish differences in media use. Then the activist/elite variable was run against the five background characteristics to try to explain any differences in frequency of newspaper and television use. Data were not available to compare the media preference with the activist/elite variable.

A chi-square test was used to gauge which variables are significantly related to activism and elitism. The tau-b (used for tables with equal numbers of rows and columns) and tau-c (appropriate for tables with unequal numbers of rows and columns) will be used to measure the strength of associations among the variables.

Chi-square tests ran the media preference and frequency of media use questions against the background characteristics. The tau-b and tau-c were used to show the strength of the

relationship between the media frequency and background variables. But a lambda statistic was used to test the strength of relationships between media preference and the background characteristics because tau-b and tau-c can only be employed with ordered variables. The media preference measure is nominal.

Lastly, an analysis of variance was run between the frequency of media use and the background characteristics. The eta squared statistic was used to indicate the amount of variance explained by each variable.

Results

The differences between activists and elites are difficult to visualize from the chi-square tables because activists comprise close to 90 percent of the sample. So, before investigating the relationships between elitism and activism with the media use and background characteristics, it is helpful to construct a profile of the activists and elites (Table 1).

Both elites and activists are heavy newspaper readers with more than three-quarters of both groups reading a newspaper often or regularly for political information. Not surprisingly, elites are the most frequent newspaper users. Elites and activists also watch television news frequently, although both activists and elites report they read newspapers more often than they watch television. Surprisingly, activists, not elites, are slightly more likely to be frequent television news viewers.

Elites and activists are more educated than the general public with about 35 percent of each group graduating from

college. Proportionally, twice as many elites than activists did postgraduate work. The relationship between activism/elitism and education does not appear to be as strong as the literature would indicate, however, since about an equal number of respondents never went beyond high school as graduated from college.

Elites, as expected, were mostly male, but the number of women activists surpassed the number of men. As predicted, the elites were bunched up in the 46-55 and 56-65 age group, but people became activists at an earlier age than expected. The largest group of activists was in the 26-35 category, but there were also many in the 36-45 and 45-55 groups.

Both activists and elites cluster on the high end of the partisanship scale with 86 percent of the elites and 69 percent of the activists in the two top partisan groups. But elites and activists were only moderately partisan with the majority scoring three on the four-point scale. Similarly, the activists and elites were only moderately active in organizations with few belonging to four or more. In fact, there were as many activists belonging to no organizations as there were belonging to four or more.

When activsts and elites are compared using the chi-square test, elites are found to be heavier newspaper readers (Table 2). The proportion of elites doubled from the "never" read to the "frequently" read categories. But the chi-square of 16 and the tau-c of .052 were relatively weak. Both hypotheses concerning activism and elitism and newspaper use are at least weakly supported.

There is no difference in television use between the activists

and elites (Table 2). The relationship is slightly curvilinear with the percentages highest among the "never" and "very frequent" viewing categories, but the differences across all the categories were miniscule. Both of the television use hypotheses were rejected.

Elites are significantly more educated than activists as predicted, but the tau-c for education was even weaker than for newspaper readership because the relationship was not linear. Differences in education level do not appear until the postgraduate work category (Table 2). The two hypotheses concering education and activism and elitism found weak support.

Age proved to discriminate the most between activism and elitism with a chi-square of 75.01 and a tau-c of .146. The relationship between age and the activism/elitism variable was strongly linear with the percentage of 66 and older being 10 times as large as that in the youngest group (Table 2). Both age predictions were supported.

Gender, as expected, also sharply divided the elites and the activists. There were three times as many male as female elites and the .123 tau-b indicated gender was the second strongest predictor of activism and elitism. (Table 2a). Two of three hypotheses found support, as women outnumbered the men among activists, contrary to predictions.

Organizational activity did not post a high chi-square, but its tau-c approached that of gender. The proportion of elites tripled from the no organization to the 4 or more groups category, but there is no strong pattern in between (Table 2a). Both

hypotheses were at least weakly supported.

No relationship was predicted between activists and elites on partisanship, but indeed elites were found to be much more partisan. The chi-square and tau-b indicate the relationship between partisanship and activism was one of the weakest, yet a strong linear relationship existed. The proportion of elites quadrupled between the lowest and highest categories(Table 2a). Only the hypotheses predicting a strong linear relationship between partisanship and activism and elitism found support.

To summarize the results from Table 1 and 2, 11 of the first 15 hypotheses received at least partial support. Elitism, as predicted, was more strongly related to five of the seven variables. Elitism was also more strongly linked to partisanship than the literature indicated. Only television use failed to discriminate between activism and elitism. As predicted, elites were male, highly educated, highly partisan, older, and heavy newspaper readers and television viewers. Activists were young or middle aged, highly educated, highly partisan and heavy television and newspaper consumers. However, the activists, not the elites, reported higher television use and both activists and elites did not belong to many organizations, contrary to expectations.

The media use profile which emerges of the activist and the elite doesn't completely match expectations.

All three demographic variables were found to be significantly related to frequency of newspaper use, but none explained a particularly high percentage of the variance. Education and age--but not gender--were found to be

significantly related to television use. Only age predicted a significant amount of the variance.

Education was significantly related to newspaper use at the .05 level. However, the crosstabulation tables showed little difference in the percentage of regular newspaper readers from the least to the most educated group (Table 3). As predicted, high levels of education was strongly related to choosing newspapers over television as the preferred medium. More than 60 percent of those with a postgraduate education chose newspapers over television while the least educated selected television (Table 3). The newspaper use and media preference hypotheses received support.

Education was significantly related to television use at the .05 level. However, there was not an apparent linear relationship. A weak inverse relationship existed until the postgraduate level where television use edged up slightly. Education was one of the poorest predictors of television use as shown by the analysis of variance (Table 7). The hypothesis between television use and education was rejected.

Age showed the clearest linear relationship with newspaper use with the percentage of regular readers jumping from 22 percent for the 18-25 group to 55 percent of the 66 and over category (Table 4). Age also predicted the second highest amount of variance (3.1 percent) in newspaper use. (Table 7) The tie between television news and age was even stronger. More than twice the percentage of 66 year old than 18-25 year olds said they watched television news frequently (Table 4). Age far outpaced the other variables in predictive value, explaining 10.5

percent of the variance (Table 7). With age so strongly related to television use, it was not surprising that age broke with expectations on media preference. Age was found to be related to choosing television not newspapers as the preferred medium. The last hypothesis, then was not supported, but the other two age and media use hypotheses found support.

Men did read newspapers more frequently than women, but the percentages in the "often" and "regular" category differed by only five percent (Table 5). Consequently, age explained only 1.8 percent of the variance (Table 7). Television use was not significantly related to gender, athough women were slightly more likely to be heavy news viewers--contrary to expectations. But men clearly preferred newspapers over television while the opposite held true for women (Table 5). Two of the three hypotheses on the relationship between age and media use were supported.

Organizational activity proved to be the best predictor of newspaper use, explaining 4.3 percent of the variance (Table 7). The percentage of regular readers increased sharply through the first three organizational activity categories, but dipped mysteriously in the four or more membership group. (Table 5) The organizational activity variable did not fare as well with television news as it explained less than 1 percent of the variance (Table 7). Although the chi-square was significant, the relationship wasn't linear. Data were not available for the relationship between organizational activity and media preference. Thus, one hypothesis was moderately and one was weakly supported.

Although partisanship explained no more of the variance in newspaper use than either age or organizational activity, (Table 7), the tau-b on the chi-square was a moderate .145 (Table 6). High partisans were twice as likely to call themselves frequent newspaper readers than the low partisans. Partisanship only explained 1.6 percent of the variance in television, but only age predicted more (Table 7). Although the relationship between television use and partisanship was linear, just 14 percentage points separated the high and low partisans among the very frequent television news use category. (Table 6). Partisanship was not significantly related to media preference. Both the high and low partisans picked television, while moderate partisans leaned toward television (Table 6). Thus, two of the three hypotheses concering partisanship and media use were supported.

Nine of the 14 hypothesis between media use and background variables found support--hardly a call for celebration. Worse, few of the relationships were strong. The five variables explained only 12 percent of the variance in newspaper use and 14.5 percent of the variance in television use. Television news viewing was explained almost exclusively by age.

Discussion

This study was able to clearly chart the demographic distinctions between activists and elites, but discovering media use patterns proved more elusive.

Perhaps it is not surprising that so few media use hypotheses turned out as expected; information on the media use patterns of activists and elites is, at best, sketchy. But scant

literature does not explain the weak relationships between media use and most of the other variables. Perhaps background characteristics could not explain a large percentage of the variance in activism and elite media use because there was little variance to explain. Seventy percent or more of both activists and elites were bunched up in the two highest frequency of newspaper and television use categories. Further, the activists and elites were generally older, more educated, more partisan and more likely to be male than the general population. Thus, there was less variance to explain in the independent variables as well.

Television failed to predict differences between activism and elitism and, except for age, was not strongly related to any of the background characteristics. But it would be a mistake to assume people simply turned off television and picked up their newspapers.

Activists and elites relied on both media as shown by the high frequency of use for both TV and newspapers. Furthermore, an almost identical number listed television and newspaper as their preferred medium (597 television, 594 newspapers). Television simply did not discriminate as well as newspapers. For instance, while the well-educated read newspapers more frequently than the poorly educated, television use cuts across all education groups.

The study did discover differences between activists and elites. Elites proved to be older, more educated more partisan and more likely to be males and members of organizations than activists. They read newspapers more frequently, although they

didn't differ significantly in television use.

This sample of activists and elites resemble the heavy media users of past studies on several important characteristics. High levels of education and organizational activity were related to frequent newspaper reading and television tended to be inversely related to education. But differences also appeared. The relationship between age and both newspaper and television use among activists and elites proved to be more linear than is indicated in the literature about the general public. Men preferred newspapers while women chose television as their favorite news source. The elites and activists showed stronger party attachment and partisanship was more strongly linked to media use than in the general public.

Age appeared to be the key factor in differentiating activists and elites as well as explaining media use behavior. This is not surprising. Elites should be older than activists. Elites do not inherit political office; most must pay their dues by doing party work, gaining visibility through community work and by serving on committees before they are considered for public office. It takes time to climb the political ladder.

High newspaper and television use among older elites and activists may reflect the increased time availability of those who have reached retirement age. This time availability hypothesis was studied post hoc through a Pearson correlation matrix. The hypothesis seems to be bolstered by the relatively strong correlation between age and organizational activity (Table 8). Obviously, joining several organizations involves a time commitment that many working people possibly could not afford.

Time availability might also explain why the youngest groups, though relatively low users of television and newspapers, so clearly chose newspapers over television as their preferred medium. Most of the 18-25 group go to college (an assumption that seems to be substantiated by the -.143 correlation between age and television use), so coursework and other activities may make it difficult to be heavy media consumers. But it may be easier to pick up a newspaper and scan the news whenever the student has a free moment than it is to sit down and watch an hour of news at dinner time.

Time availability of a different stripe may be at work with organizational activity. Newspaper use and organizational activity increased linearly until the four or more organizations category where it suddenly dropped off. Perhaps three organizations is the optimum; any more and these groups eat into time available for other activities, including media consumption.

The literature leads us to expect males to dominate the elites--and they did. But is was surprising that such a gender distinction appeared in media preference. Past studies have attributed much of the difference in degrees of participation to lower levels of education. Indeed, correlational analysis revealed that men were significantly more likely to be highly educated than women (Table 8). With more women going on to college--and more women among the ranks of the political activists--the gender gap should close in future years.

For this researcher, the results with respect to education were surprising. Past studies indicated it was a strong predictor

of media use. In fact, several media use studies used education as a control variable. In this study the relationships with media use were weak. This may be because education does not discriminate well. In a sample of the general population, one would expect to find a wide range of educational attainment levels. But in this study, nearly everyone was well-educated. More than 30 percent graduated from college and fewer than 5 percent did not graduate from high school.

Researchers have debated whether partisanship promotes or inhibits heavy media use. This study provides at least a partial answer. Partisanship was strongly related to newspaper use and moderately tied to television viewing. It was one of the best predictors of both. But while the moderate partisans relied on both television and newspapers equally, both the high and low partisans picked television as their preferred medium.

Age may explain television preference among high partisans. Older citizens are the most likely to develop strong party identification.[77] Indeed, in this study the .306 correlation between age and partisanship was the strongest in the matrix. Low political interest among the low partisans may explain why they prefer television. Those with low political interest prefer television to newspapers.[78]

This study does not pretend to answer all the questions which could be posed about media use behavior among activists and elites. This study does not measure the effects of communication on activists and elites nor does it investigate all the background characteristics that may explain media use behavior.

But this study does show that elites have different media

behavior than activists and that those characteristics which explain media use behavior in activists and elites do not necessarily match those found in studies of the general public. Hopefully, this study will spur other researchers to investigate the media use behavior of political activists and political elites. It is the activists and elites who make the decisions which make this democracy work and the media provide a major source of information on which those decisions are based. We cannot completely understand the political decision-making process without first understanding the media use behavior of those who make those political decisions.

Table 1. Media use, demographic profile of activists and elites

	Elites	Activists
Newspaper use		
Not at all	0.8%	1.4%
Once in awhile	7.8	9.0
Time to time	5.4	12.5
Often	30.4	30.4
Regularly	55.6	46.8
Television use		
Never	2.7%	3.4%
Rarely	9.7	8.7
Sometimes	19.4	17.2
Frequently	30.6	27.1
V. Frequently	37.6	43.7
Education		
Grades 1-11	5.0%	4.6%
High School grad	28.5	30.4
1-3 years college	31.3	32.9
College grad	21.8	25.4
Post graduate work	13.2	6.6
Age		
18-25	1.6%	3.9%
26-35	10.1	24.3
36-45	16.3	19.0
46-55	30.0	21.1
56-65	23.0	14.5
66 and over	19.1	10.0
Gender		
Male	75.6%	48.8%
Female	24.4	51.2
Org. activity		
0 groups	6.2%	17.6%
1	25.3	30.6
2	36.9	23.5
3	21.2	14.3
4 or more	10.4	8.1
Partisanship		
Low	1.7%	4.6%
2	12.1	26.5
3	63.2	55.3
High	23.0	13.6

Table 2. Activism/elitism by media use, demographic variables

Newspaper use

	Not at all	Once in a while	time to time	Often	Regularly
Activist	92.0%	92.0%	92.8%	86.6%	84.4%
Elites	8.0	8.0	7.2	13.4	15.6
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
n=	25	162	222	580	916

Chi-square	df	Sig	tau-c
15.99	4	.003	.052

Television use

	Never	Rarely	some-times	Freq.	V. Frec
Activist	88.9%	85.3%	85.5%	85.4%	88.5%
Elites	11.1	14.7	14.5	14.6	11.5
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
n=	65	173	342	540	840

Chi-square	df	Sig.	tau-c
4.12	4	.390	.025

Education

	Grades 1-11	H.S. grad	1-3 yrs college	College grad	Postgrad work
Activist	84.7%	86.4%	86.3%	87.4%	75.0%
Elites	15.3	13.6	13.7	12.6	25.0
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
n=	72	463	582	382	116

Chi-square	df	Sig	tau-c	
12.10	4	0.025	.013	*

Age

	18-25	26-35	36-45	46-55	56-65	66+
Activist	97.6	94.4	88.3	82.1	80.3	78.2
Elites	2.4	5.9	11.7	17.9	19.7	21.8
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
n=	163	441	359	419	300	225

Chi-square	df	Sig	tau-c
75.01	5	.000	.146

Table 2a. Activism/elitism by demographic variables

Gender

	Males	Females
Activists	80.9	93.2
Elites	19.1	6.8
	100.0%	100.0%
n=	1002	911

Chi-square	df	Sig.	tau-b
61.39	1	.000	.123

Org. activity

	No org.	1	2	3	4 or more
Activist	94.8%	88.7%	83.8%	81.3%	83.4%
Elites	5.2	11.3	16.2	18.7	16.6
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
n=	289	540	550	275	191

Chi-square	df	Sig.	tau-c
37.06	4	.000	.091

Participation

	Low	2	3	High
Activist	94.7	91.5	85.2	79.6
Elites	5.3	8.5	14.8	20.4
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
n=	76	447	1022	269

Chi-square	df	Sig.	tau-c
36.62	3	.0000	.099

Table 3. Frequency of media use, media preference by education

Education

Newspaper use	Grades 1-11	HS grad	1-3 yrs college	Col. grad	P. grad work
Rarely	7%	12%	12%	7%	8%
Time to time	12	14	13	11	9
Often	30	33	30	31	30
Regularly	51	51	46	51	53
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
nm	74	473	317	387	506

Chi-square	df	Sig.	Tau-c
27.70	15	p<.025	.031

Television use	Grades 1-11	HS grad	1-3 yrs college	Col. grad	P. grad work
Rarely	5%	9%	11%	16%	14%
Sometimes	9	18	20	17	16
Frequently	22	32	30	28	32
V. Frequently	64	41	40	37	38
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
nm	74	472	317	388	505

Chi-square	df	Sig.	Tau-c
32.41	15	p<.01	.002

Media preference	Grades 1-11	HS grad	1-3 yrs college	Col. grad	P. grad work
Newspapers	39%	38%	40%	55%	63%
Television	61	62	51	45	37
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
nm	49	308	318	224	208

Chi-square	df	Sig.	Lambda
42.39	4	p<.001	.038

Table 4. Media use frequency, media preference by age

	Age					
Newspaper use	18-25	26-35	36-45	46-55	56-65	66+
Rarely	18%	14%	8%	7%	5%	6%
Time to time	19	13	13	10	11	8
Often	30	29	32	32	32	32
Regularly	32	43	47	51	53	55
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
nn	173	449	365	436	304	242

Chi-square	df	Sig	Tau-c
66.43	15	(.001	.069

Television use	18-25	26-35	36-45	46-55	56-65	66+
Rarely	17%	14%	17%	11%	9%	4%
Sometimes	24	22	20	14	15	10
Frequently	31	31	26	29	26	22
V. Frequently	28	33	37	46	51	65
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
nn	173	450	365	435	304	241

Chi-square	df	Sig.	Tau-c
111..0	15	p(.001	.190

Media choice	18-25	26-35	36-45	46-55	56-65	66+
Newspapers	58%	50%	54%	49%	45%	45%
Television	42	50	46	51	55	55
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
nn	106	294	232	260	176	123

Chi-square	df	Sig.	Tau-c
7.28	5	N.S.	.061

Table 5. Media use frequency, preference by gender, org. activity

Gender

Newspaper use	Male	Female
Rarely	8%	11%
Time to time	10	14
Often	30	33
Regularly	52	42
	100.0%	100.0%
na	1022	939

Chi-square	df	Sig.	Lewis
22.56	3	p(.001	.034

Television use	Male	Female
Rarely	13%	12%
Sometimes	18	17
Frequently	28	27
V.Frequently	41	44
	100.0%	100.0%
na	1021	939

Chi-square	df	Sig.	Lewis
2.03	3	N.S.	.031

Media Preference	Male	Female
Newspapers	56%	44%
Television	44	56
	100.0%	100.0%
na	612	575

Chi-square	df	Sig.	Lambda
22.91	4	p(.001	.115

Organizational Activity

Newspaper use	No org.	1	2	3	4 or more
Rarely	14.8	12.2	7.5	4.7	7.9
Time to time	18.2	15.1	9.1	6.5	5.9
Often	34.2	29.7	30.0	30.8	30.3
Regularly	32.9	43.0	53.5	58.0	56.2
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
na	292	558	563	276	153

Chi-square	df	Sig.	Lewis
76.86	12	p(.001	.088

Table 6. Media frequency, media preference by partisanship

	Partisanship			
Newspaper use	Low	2	3	High
Rarely	13%	12%	10%	5%
Time to time	20	15	10	9
Often	34	34	31	25
Regularly	26	41	49	60
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
n=	114	666	968	111

Chi-square	df	Sig.	tau-b
47.89	9	p(.001	.145

Television use	Low	2	3	High
Rarely	17%	16%	11%	11%
Sometimes	21	16	19	18
Frequently	28	28	28	24
V. Frequently	34	40	43	48
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
n=	111	666	999	114

Chi-square	df	Sig.	Tau-b
25.04	9	p(.001	.092

Media preference	Low	2	3	High
Newspapers	46%	52%	50%	42%
Television	54	48	50	58
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
n=	72	381	592	84

Chi-square	df	Sig.	Lambda
3.00	3	N.S.	.034

Table 7. Analysis of variance for media use, background variables

Newspaper

	Sigma	Eta sq.
Education	p(.001	.018
Age	p(.003	.031
Gender	p(.001	.010
Org. activity	p(.001	.043
Partisanship	p(.001	.016

Television

	Sigma	Eta sq.
Age	p(.001	.105
Gender	N.S.	.001
Org. activity	p(.05	.003
Partisanship	p(.001	.016

Table 8. Pearson correlation matrix

	Paper Use	TV use	Act/ elite	Ed.	Age	Sex	Org. Act.	Part.
Paper use	1.00	.211*	DNA	.094*	.162*	.101*	.179*	.162*
TV use		1.00	DNA	-.046	.222*	-.023	.082*	.111*
Act./elite			1.00	DNA	DNA	DNA	.212*	DNA
Education				1.00	-143*	.169*	.226*	.103*
Age					1.00	.004	.192*	.300*
Gender						1.00	DNA	.163*
Org. act.							1.00	DNA
Partisan								1.00

*Significant at .05
DNA=data not available

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[71]Respondents were asked whether they were members of 12 types of groups, ranging from unions and educational associations to women's groups, fraternal organizations and anti-abortion groups. The index simply summed the number of groups to which the respondent belonged. The index was divided into no organizations belonged to, 1, 2, 3, 4 or more organizations.

[72]The six questions used in the political partisan index and possible answer categories were: 1) "How would you describe the strength of your party support?" Possible answers were "strong party supporter, "party supporter, but not very strong," and

independent who is closer to the Democrats, " an independent who is closer to the Republicans," or "an independent, but not closer to one party or the other." 2) Will you support the nominee of your party in the 1980 Presidential election? The possible answers were "definitely will,"probably will, "probably will not," and "does not apply (as an independent)." 3) Since you have been voting, in how many general elections have you voted for the candidate of one party? Possible answers were "all," "most of them" "some of them," "very few," and "none." 4) "A good party worker should support any candidate nominated by the party even if he basically disagrees with the candidate." The possible answers to those question, as well as the final two, ranged in a five-point Likert scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree. 5) One should stand for the candidate of one's party even if it means voting against an issue one feels strongly about. 6) An important reason for being active in politics is that one should be loyal to the party and its candidates whose policies and principles one supports."

[73]George W. Bohrnstedt and David Knoke. Statistics for Social Data Analysis. Itasca, Ill: F.E. Peacock Publishers.

[74]Possible answers were "not at all," "once in awhile," "time to time," "often" and "regularly." The first two categories were combined into a "rarely" category because of the few respondents who never read the newspaper.

[75]Possible responses were, "rarely," "sometimes," "frequently," and "very frequently."

[76]e.g. Abramowitz, Rapoport, McGlennon, 1986; Abramowitz and Stone, 1984.

[77]Campbell et al, 1960, p. 161; Milbrath, 1965, p. 52.

[78]O'Keefe and Atwood, 1981, p. 337.